

pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

Sunday School

PETER AND CORNELIUS.

Acts 10: 1-43.

Lesson for April 4, 1909.

Golden Text—"In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."—Acts 10: 35.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 49. Which is the second commandment?

A. The second commandment is, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Acts 10: 1-16.

Tu.—Acts 10: 17-33.

W.—Acts 10: 34-43.

Th.—Acts 11: 1-18.

F.—Gal. 3: 7-14.

S.—John 4: 1-14.

S.—Isa. 60: 1-11.

LESSON COMMENT.

It is always interesting to study the events connected with and contributing to a crisis in any institution. We are dealing in this lesson with a great crisis. The church now confronts the issue: Jewish or Christian. By far the best and certainly the most uplifting, as well as the most honoring, to the great Head of the church will be a study of the providential guidance, as evidenced in this incident. As is always true when God is ordering an affair, the time, the place and the men are just exactly right. To speak humanly, too much is involved at this point in the church's history to permit of any bungling.

First, as to the time. For about eight years the church had remained Jewish. It would seem that the Apostles were exceedingly slow in taking up the world-wide program laid down by Christ. Is it not true, however, that the very slowness is working to the advantage of the tremendous interests involved? There are many things in the Jewish church essential to the proper conduct of the work of the Christian institution. Most of the growth of the Jewish church, it is true, is cut away, but the stock remains and upon it, or into it, to be more exact, the Christian Church is grafted. There must be time for the cutting to heal and for the grafting to take hold before the growth can begin. We must carefully guard ourselves against looking upon the Christian Church as something entirely new. There is a vital connection between the old covenant and the new. Much, exceeding much, that was temporal and non-essential in Judaism passed away, but the essence remained and became the foundation of Christian polity and worship. Still, it should also be noted that not too much time must elapse between the beginning of the work among the Jews and the extension to the Gentiles. If the time be long the church will become too thoroughly Jewish. But God is ruling and overruling and all things will work together for good. All things are now ready; the great Apos-

tle to the Gentiles, Paul, has been converted and is in preparation for the work he is to do; the church is at rest, largely because of the absorption of the Jews in the work of overcoming the designs of Caligula for establishing the worship of himself; and the Gospel has been preached by Philip and others in and about those centers where there are many Gentiles.

The Place. There is a great deal to interest us in the place chosen for the beginning of the work among the Gentiles. It is not just a happy chance that makes Caesarea the chosen place. A reference to the map and to the history of the place will indicate its importance as the starting point of such a great work. It is the capital of the Roman power in Palestine, a city of magnificent government buildings and a splendid artificial harbor. The fact that it was the center of the Roman power made it the ideal place for the beginning of the Gentile movement. A prominent scholar says: "Caesarea was to a large extent a Gentile city, though within some seventy miles of Jerusalem. It had a considerable Jewish population, with their attendant synagogues, but the most prominent features were pagan temples, one of them serving for a lighthouse and beacon for the ships which crowded its harbor, together with a theater and an amphitheater, where scenes were daily enacted from which every sincere Jew must have shrunk with horror. Such was the place—a most fitting place, Gentile, pagan, idolatrous to the very core and center—where God chose to reveal himself as Father of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews, and showed Christ's gospel as a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of His people, Israel."

The Men. How well fitted for the parts assigned them are the two men who are prominent in this incident: Cornelius and Peter. Cornelius, "a devout man, who feared God with all his house, praying to God always, and giving much alms to the people." It follows that he was, because of these facts, popular with the Jewish people and was, therefore, the best man to begin with, as his conversion to Christianity would not give the offense that would be given by the conversion of some Gentile who was not acceptable to the Jews. Now, that Cornelius has been brought in, it will be easier to make the transition to other Gentiles. The other person prominent in the event is the Apostle, Peter. He is eminently qualified naturally for the work and his vision has shown him exactly what the Lord expects of him in going to the Gentiles. Peter is an interesting study, from the point of view of seeking and following the divine guidance. He never, in all the incidents recorded of him, took glory to himself. He magnified the Lord. In the last incident we had, the raising of Dorcas, we find his main dependence in prayer. He has been going up and down the land doing what Christ had commanded him to do—feed the world's sleep. When he realizes the meaning of the vision he has no hesitancy, no questioning, but goes straight ahead to do what the Lord wishes him to do.

Notwithstanding all the interest that attaches to this lesson, as showing the beginning of the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, its teaching as to the leadings of providence should by no means be overlooked.

Geo. D. Booth.

THE LAKE.

Low lies the lake, the purple peaks reflecting.

Holding the heights half-hidden in its heart,

So may my life, its lowly light perfecting,

Reveal thine image, Savior, as Thou art.

—W. H. T. Squires.